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ABSTRACT

This assessment survey is intended to provide adult educators with some insights into the real and perceived stresses felt by their adult basic education (ABE) students. The test consists of 35 questions dealing with such items as failure in general, specific subject area, test taking, health, personal and marital problems, financial problems, relationship with younger students, child care, emotions, sources of information and emotional support, and perception of personal control over one's educational goals. Students are asked to rate the amount of stress perceived as a result of individual stress variables on a scale of 1 to 5. (MN)

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ADULT LITERACY and BASIC EDUCATION
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FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

IDENTIFYING STRESS IN ADULT LEARNERS

Ruben C. Ochoa

In the "From Theory to Practice" section of the Volume 7, Number 3 issue of *Adult Literacy and Basic Education*, several principles were suggested for consideration by the teachers of adults. Included in these were establishing a learner-centered classroom and building a friendly and informal climate. Adult students who have been out of the educational setting for an extended period of time may experience a great deal of apprehension upon returning to school. Therefore, if teachers are going to try to create a comfortable situation in the classroom for returning adults, it is useful for them to know the level of stress and types of stress that students have as they re-enter their educational programs. The following assessment survey can provide the instructor with some insights into the real and perceived stressors that the students are feeling. It can also serve as a useful discussion device to give students feedback about events in their lives that may be influencing their lives and which might affect their performance in school.

Stress is caused by a variety of factors that are either real or perceived. Stressors may affect the physical, mental, biological, emotional, and spiritual well-being of those returning to an educational program after an extended absence. The "Returning Adult Learner Stress Survey" attempts to identify several of these factors. It was adapted from the American College Testing Program's "Adult Learner Needs Assessment Survey." The outcomes that may be obtained from this informal assessment can assist the teacher in allaying student's fears. If barriers exist to the learning process, this information may serve as a source to assist the student in getting counseling or indicate the types of needed referrals to agencies that can provide the required support services.

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Returning Adult Learner Stress Survey

Directions: Please circle the number in the appropriate column for each description listed below as to how you perceive the item to be a stress-related factor that affects you as a returning adult student. Consider the stress each item causes, and consider how it affects your personal life, your family, your work, and your role as a student. Use the following scale: 1. Does not apply to me (NA); 2. No stress (N); 3. Causes low stress (L); 4. Causes medium stress (M); 5. Causes high stress (H).

Stress Factors	NA	N	L	M	H
1. Fear of failure	1	2	3	4	5
2. Taking math or difficult subjects	1	2	3	4	5
3. Speaking in public or in class	1	2	3	4	5
4. Writing letters and papers	1	2	3	4	5
5. Not having good study skills and habits	1	2	3	4	5
6. Being a slow reader	1	2	3	4	5
7. Taking tests	1	2	3	4	5
8. Determining my educational goals	1	2	3	4	5
9. Finding a job to pay for school	1	2	3	4	5
10. Handling pressure in my own life	1	2	3	4	5
11. Completing graduation requirements	1	2	3	4	5
12. Dealing with personal conflicts	1	2	3	4	5
13. Using the library	1	2	3	4	5
14. Maintaining my health	1	2	3	4	5
15. Working with counselors	1	2	3	4	5
16. Talking with teachers	1	2	3	4	5
17. Expressing my own values	1	2	3	4	5
18. Dealing with people different than me	1	2	3	4	5
19. Getting to see those in charge at school	1	2	3	4	5
20. Coping with marital problems	1	2	3	4	5
21. Dealing with problems of divorce	1	2	3	4	5
22. Relating to younger students	1	2	3	4	5
23. Interesting others in my education	1	2	3	4	5
24. Getting financial aid to return to school	1	2	3	4	5
25. Learning my way around the school	1	2	3	4	5

26.	Getting child-care services	1	2	3	4	5
27.	Feeling isolated, lonely, or alienated	1	2	3	4	5
28.	Forced to study meaningless topics	1	2	3	4	5
29.	Talking to others about my problems	1	2	3	4	5
30.	No flexibility in my educational program	1	2	3	4	5
31.	Lack of an orientation session	1	2	3	4	5
32.	No information guide for the program	1	2	3	4	5
33.	Not knowing whom to ask for help	1	2	3	4	5
34.	Not in control of my educational goals	1	2	3	4	5
35.	Not having my experiences considered	1	2	3	4	5

Other Factors

If there are any other stressors that affect you as a returning student and were not included on this list, please add them on the lines below. Also rate each of them as causing high stress (HS), medium stress (MS), or low stress (LS).

Submit Your Ideas
for
From Theory to Practice

The "From Theory to Practice" section of *Adult Literacy and Basic Education* is designed to be a page that adult educators can snap out of the journal and use immediately. This section has been part of the journal since the beginning of Volume 7. During that time, ESL and basic reading tests, a staff development handout, an exercise on creating classroom dialogues, a stress assessment, and math materials from a commerical publisher have been featured in this section. If you have some materials that you have created or adopted or if you have some dynamite ideas, submit them to us so they can be shared with others in this section. If you have never published anything before or if you feel your ideas are still in rough form, submit them anyway; we will work with you to get them in a suitable style for this column.

--The Editors--